The Erotic Horror Classic Of Female Vampirism!

CARMILLA

For Adults Only...

A • AIRCEL COMICS • #3 (of 6) • $2.50/$3.00 in Canada

Based On The Story by Sheridan Le Fanu

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu has been called "England's only great writer of the supernatural," and one of his final stories, *Carmilla*, has been called "probably the best vampire story ever written."

He was born in 1814, the grand-nephew of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and grew up to write stories that, in the words of Professor Robert Donald Spector of Long Island University, "bristle with a faith in the occult and mysterious." Le Fanu married in 1844, spent 14 blissful years with his exceptional bride, and was crushed by her unexpected death in 1858. He lived as a recluse for the remainder of his life, withdrawing into his house in Merrion Square, Dublin, venturing out only during the late afternoon to haunt second-hand bookshops, looking for ghost stories. He rarely slept, plagued by a recurring nightmare of his house falling in on him, and spent the late-evening and early-morning hours in bed sipping green tea and writing his ghost stories.

Carmilla first appeared in the magazine "The Dark Blue" (1871) and was reprinted the following year in Le Fanu's collection, *In A Glass Darkly*. Unlike this adaptation, Le Fanu's original story *suggested* an undercurrent of homosexuality, an indelicate and taboo topic in most genres but not in the Gothic, where incest, murder and rape go hand in hand with "mysterious occurrences, haunted castles and erotic experiences." Laura, Le Fanu's heroine, writes:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, [Carmilla] would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering.

According to Professor Spector, Le Fanu is "determined to demonstrate the victory of the irrational over the rational mind." General Spielsdorf, Laura's anonymous father, and Doctor Spielsberg must all come to terms with Carmilla's vampirism, accepting what their scientifically-attuned minds tell them simply cannot be.

Le Fanu's name is not as famous here in America as Poe, Hawthorne, James or Lovecraft, but his writings are well worth the reading for anyone who loves a superior ghost story. Among Le Fanu's other works are "The House by The Churchyard," "Wylder's Hand," "Wyvery Mystery" and "Uncle Silas."

Steven Jones

"But first on earth, as Vampyre sent
Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent;
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race;
There from thy *daughter, sister, wife,*
At midnight drain the stream of life;
Yet *loathe the banquet, which perforce*
Must feed thy livid living corse."
Lord Byron, "Giaour"

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CARMILLA #3 of 6 • March 1991
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All characters engaged in sexual activity are at least 18 years of age.

"CARMILLA, DEAR, HERE IS AN ABSOLUTE MIRACLE.

"HERE *YOU* ARE, LIVING, SMILING, READY TO SPEAK, IN THIS PICTURE."

ISN'T IT *BEAUTIFUL*, PAPA ? AND SEE, EVEN THE LITTLE *MOLE* ON HER THROAT.

CERTAINLY IT IS A *WONDERFUL* LIKENESS.

AND NOW YOU CAN READ QUITE *PLAINLY* THE NAME THAT IS WRITTEN IN THE CORNER.

IT IS NOT MARCIA; IT LOOKS AS IF IT WAS DONE IN GOLD.

Mircalla, Countess Karnstein A.D. 1698

THE NAME IS *MIRCALLA*, COUNTESS KARNSTEIN, AND THIS IS A LITTLE *CORONET* OVER IT, AND UNDERNEATH A.D. 1698.

I AM DESCENDED FROM THE KARNSTEINS: THAT IS, MAMMA WAS.

AH!, SO AM I, I THINK, A VERY *LONG* DESCENT, VERY ANCIENT.

ARE THERE ANY KARNSTEINS LIVING NOW?

NONE WHO BEAR THE SAME NAME. THE FAMILY WERE *RUINED* I BELIEVE, IN SOME CIVIL WARS, LONG AGO.

BUT THE RUINS OF THE CASTLE ARE *ONLY* ABOUT THREE MILES AWAY.

WILL YOU LET ME HANG THIS PICTURE IN MY ROOM, PAPA?

CERTAINLY, LITTLE SWEET. I'M VERY ***GLAD*** YOU THINK IT SO LIKE.

IT MUST BE ***PRETTIER*** EVEN THAN I THOUGHT IT, IF IT IS.

CARMILLA?

ARE YOU GLAD I CAME?

PARDON?

ARE YOU GLAD I'VE BEEN A GUEST IN YOUR BEAUTIFUL CHATEAU?

DELIGHTED, DEAR CARMILLA.

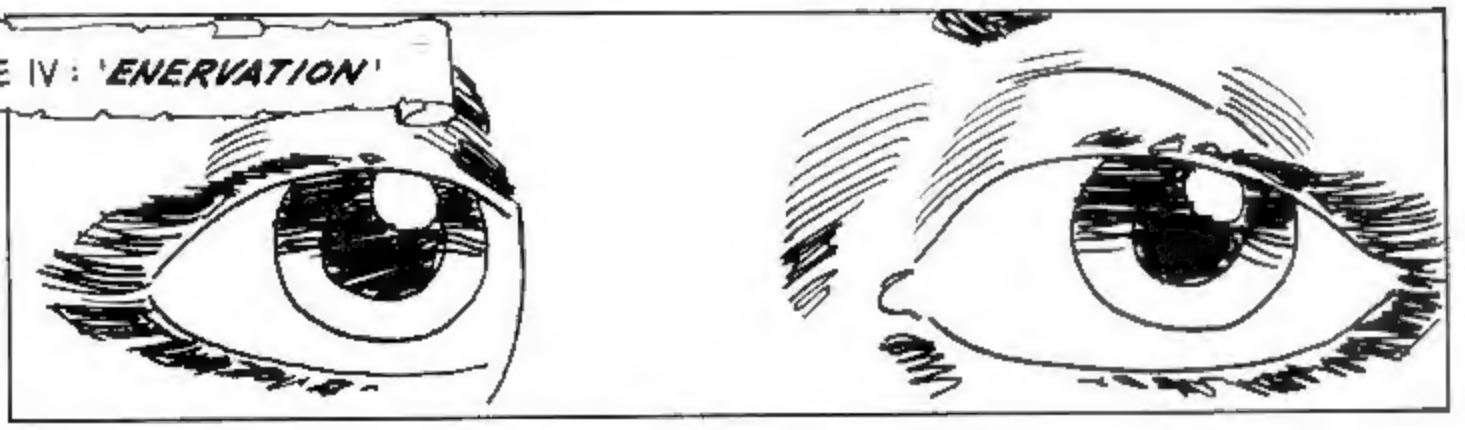
AND YOU ASK FOR THE *PICTURE* YOU THINK LIKE ME, TO HANG IN YOUR ROOM.

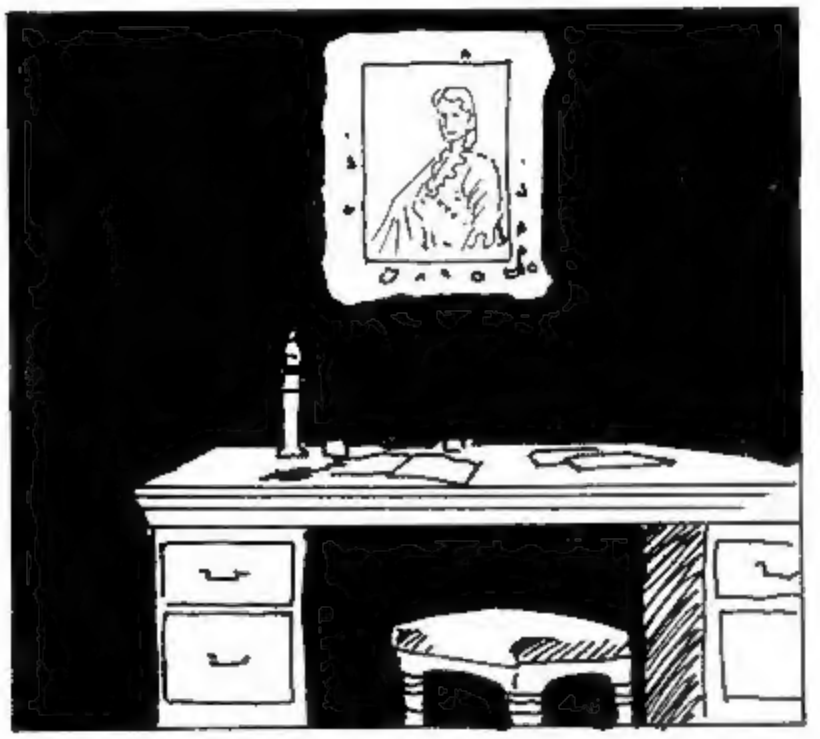
HOW *ROMANTIC* YOU ARE, CARMILLA.

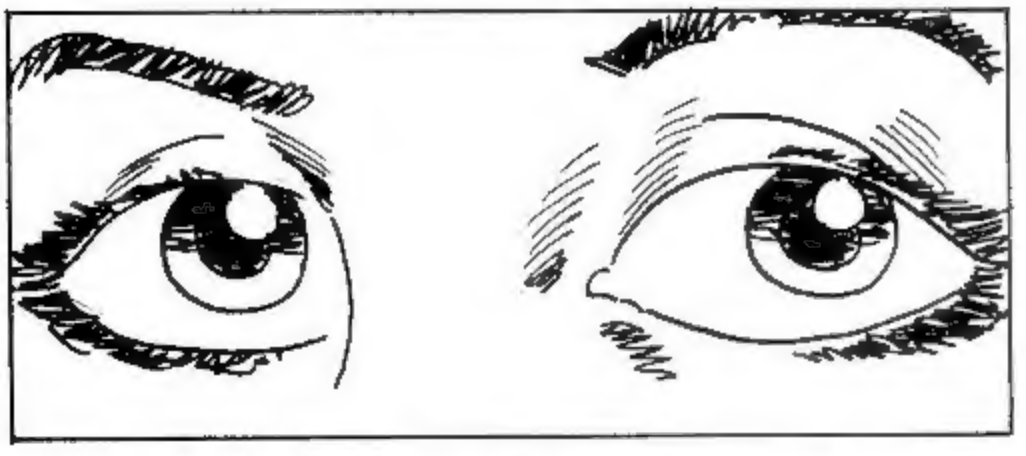
WHENEVER YOU TELL ME YOUR STORY, IT WILL BE MADE UP CHIEFLY OF SOME ONE GREAT ROMANCE.

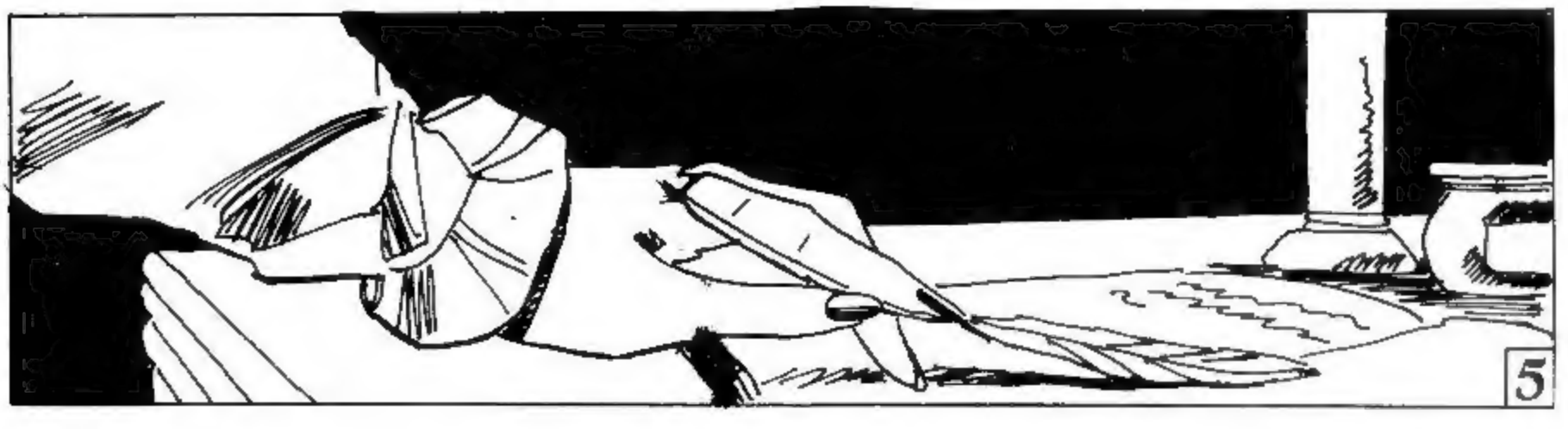
I TOLD YOU ONCE, I HAVE BEEN IN *LOVE* WITH NO ONE, AND NEVER SHALL, UNLESS IT *SHOULD* BE WITH YOU.

IX. INTERLUDE IV : 'ENERVATION'









KNOCK KNOCK

ENTER, PLEASE.

SARAH? YOU SHOULDN'T BE ABOUT AT *THIS* HOUR IN YOUR CONDITION!

I'M FINE. REALLY.

OF COURSE, IF YOU'D *RATHER* I GO...

NO, DEAR, NO. IS SOMETHING *TROUBLING* YOU?

THE PORTRAIT IN MY ROOM *TAUNTS* ME.

IT RESEMBLES YOU SO MUCH, BUT IT IS *NOT* YOU.

ITS EYES NEVER BLINK. ITS MOUTH NEVER SPEAKS MY NAME. I CANNOT KISS IT, OR HOLD ITS *WARM BODY* AGAINST MINE.

I *CANNOT* LOVE SOMETHING THAT ISN'T HUMAN.

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AND I HAVE BEEN IN LOVE WITH ***NO ONE***, AND NEVER SHALL, UNLESS IT SHOULD BE WITH YOU.

AHHHHHH.

'IN THE RAPTURE OF MY ENORMOUS HUMILIATION I LIVE IN YOUR WARM LIFE--'

SARAH.

'--AND YOU SHALL DIE--DIE, SWEETLY DIE--INTO MINE.'

OOOOOH. I'VE NEVER... UHHH. ***YES.***

'I CANNOT HELP IT.'

'AS I DRAW NEAR TO YOU, YOU, IN TURN, WILL DRAW NEAR TO OTHERS--'

YES!

'--AND LEARN THE RAPTURE OF THAT CRUEL-TY WHICH YET IS LOVE.'

I LOVE YOU, CARMILLA. WITH *ALL* MY SOUL.

I LOVE *YOU*, SARAH.

UUUhhhhhnn!

OH, MY... DEAR, *IRRESISTIBLE* CARMILLA.

TO DIE AS LOVERS MAY TO DIE TOGETHER, TO DIE THAT THEY MAY LIVE FOREVER.

"GIRLS ARE CATERPILLARS WHILE THEY LIVE IN THE WORLD--"

--TO BE FINALLY BUTTERFLIES WHEN THE SUMMER COMES.

BUT IN THE MEANTIME THEY ARE GRUBS AND LARVAE.

Ooooh... uuuuh...

X. THE DOCTOR

ANYTHING, DOCTOR SPIELBERG?

SARAH, YOU MENTIONED A SENSATION LIKE THAT OF TWO *NEEDLES* PIERCING THE SKIN--

--ON THE NIGHT WHEN YOU EXPERIENCED YOUR FIRST HORRIBLE DREAM.

YES, SIR.

PLEASE POINT TO IT NOW WITHOUT LOOKING.

HERE.

THIS SAME POINT WAS THE CENTER OF THAT *THRILL* YOU DESCRIBED LIKE THE CURRENT OF A COLD STREAM?

YES.

IS THERE ANY DANGER?

I TRUST NOT, MY DEAR. I DON'T SEE WHY YOU SHOULD NOT BEGIN *IMMEDIATELY* TO GET BETTER.

MAY I SPEAK TO YOUR *FATHER* A MOMENT?

WHAT DO YOU ADVISE?

DO NOT LET MISS SARAH BE *ALONE* FOR ONE MOMENT. THAT IS MY *ONLY* DIRECTION, BUT IT IS INDISPENSIBLE.

PAPA..?

THIS LETTER HAD BEEN DELAYED; IT IS FROM *GENERAL SPIELSDORF*. HE MAY BE HERE TODAY, OR MAY NOT COME TILL TOMORROW.

I WISH HE HAD CHOSEN ANY *OTHER* TIME TO VISIT.

DOES DR. SPIELBERG THINK ME VERY ILL?

YOU HEARD WHAT HE HAD TO SAY, SARAH.

HE THINKS, IF RIGHT STEPS ARE TAKEN, YOU WILL BE QUITE *WELL* AGAIN IN A DAY OR TWO.

WHAT DOES HE THINK IS THE MATTER?

NOTHING! YOU MUST NOT *PLAGUE* ME WITH QUESTIONS!

I'M SORRY, LITTLE SWEET.

IT'S ALRIGHT, PAPA.

YOU SHALL KNOW ALL ABOUT IT IN A DAY OR TWO: THAT IS ALL *I* KNOW.

"IN THE MEAN-TIME, I WOULD LIKE US TO GO VISIT THE ***PRIEST*** THIS AFTERNOON.

"HIS HOME LIES NEAR THE RUINS OF KARNSTEIN."

WHAT SAY YOU, ME, MADAM PERRODON, AND CARMILLA RIDE THE ***CARRIAGE*** THERE AND HAVE A PIC-NIC ?

OH, PAPA, THAT WOULD BE ***WONDERFUL!***

THANK YOU!

OH, MY! NOW ***THIS*** IS THE LITTLE GIRL I KNOW.

I MUST TELL CARMILLA RIGHT AWAY.

SHE WILL BE OVERJOYED!

XI. THE GENERAL

"I NOW WRITE, AFTER AN INTERVAL OF MORE THAN TEN YEARS, WITH A TREMBLING HAND -

"--WITH A CONFUSED AND HORRIBLE RECOLLECTION OF CERTAIN OCCURRENCES AND SITUATIONS, IN THE ORDEAL THROUGH WHICH I WAS UNCONSCIOUSLY PASSING.

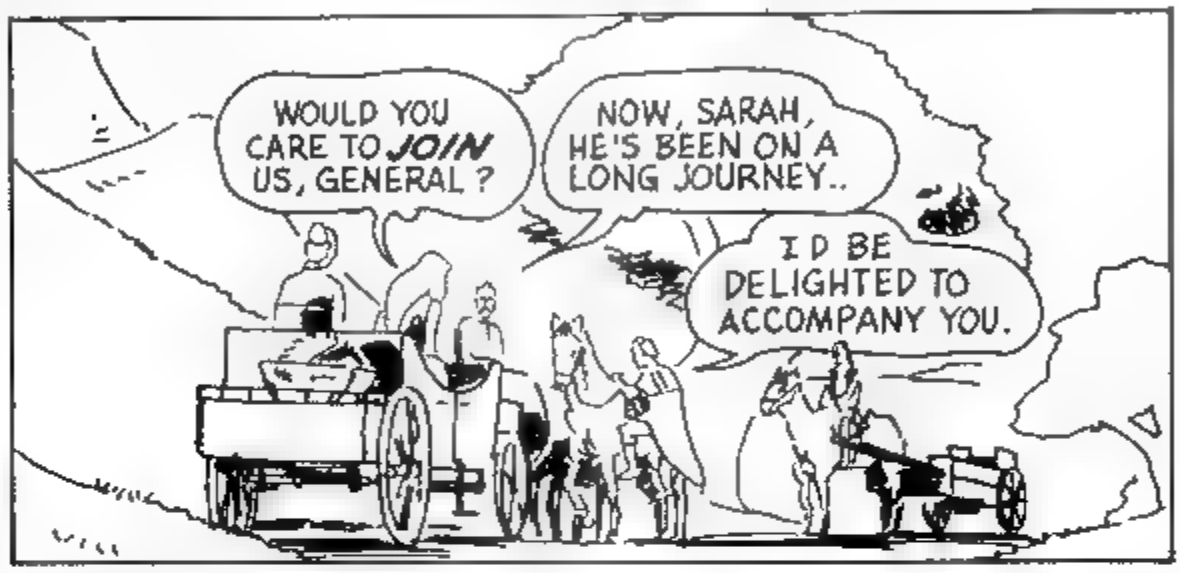
"CARMILLA HAD NOT YET RISEN FOR THE DAY.

"WE'D LEFT A MESSAGE FOR HER WITH THE SERVANTS AS TO OUR DAY'S DESTINATION."

WHOA.. GENERAL!

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE, OLD FRIEND. WHERE ARE YOU GOING ?
GOOD TO SEE YOU. TO THE PRIEST'S.
BUT WE'RE STOPPING OFF AT THE RUINS OF KARNSTEIN FOR A PIC-NIC ALONG THE WAY.

REALLY ? HOW COINCIDENTAL.


WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN US, GENERAL ?
NOW, SARAH, HE'S BEEN ON A LONG JOURNEY..
I'D BE DELIGHTED TO ACCOMPANY YOU.

YOU KNOW I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU TO BRING ME TO KARNSTEIN TO INSPECT A SPECIAL OBJECT.
THERE IS A RUINED CHAPEL, AIN'T THERE, WITH A GREAT MANY TOMBS OF THAT EXTINCT FAMILY ?

SO THERE ARE-- HIGHLY INTERESTING.
I HOPE YOU ARE THINKING OF CLAIMING THE TITLE AND ESTATES ?

SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT. I MEAN TO *UNEARTH* SOME OF THOSE FINE PEOPLE

I HOPE, BY GOD'S BLESSING, TO ACCOMPLISH A PIOUS *SACRILEGE* HERE--

--WHICH WILL *RELIEVE* OUR EARTH OF CERTAIN MONSTERS, AND ENABLE HONEST PEOPLE TO SLEEP IN THEIR BEDS WITHOUT BEING *ASSAILED* BY MURDERERS.

THE HOUSE OF KARNSTEIN HAS BEEN LONG EXTINCT: A HUNDRED YEARS AT LEAST.

MY DEAR WIFE WAS MATERNALLY DESCENDED FROM THE KARNSTEINS.

BUT THE NAME AND TITLE HAVE LONG CEASED TO EXIST. THE CASTLE IS A RUIN; THE VERY *VILLAGE* IS DESERTED.

QUITE TRUE, TOBIAS.

I HAVE HEARD A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THAT SINCE I LAST SAW YOU; A GREAT DEAL THAT WILL *ASTONISH* YOU.

"YOU SAW MY NIECE, MY WARD -- MY CHILD, I MAY CALL HER."

"YES, POOR THING! WHEN I SAW HER LAST SHE CERTAINLY WAS QUITE LOVELY."

SHE HAD BECOME AN OBJECT OF VERY DEAR *INTEREST* TO ME. THE YEARS THAT REMAIN TO ME ON EARTH MAY NOT BE VERY LONG--

--BUT BY GOD'S MERCY I HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH A SERVICE TO MANKIND BEFORE I DIE.

HOW FAR IS IT TO THE RUINS?

ABOUT HALF A LEAGUE.

LET ME TELL YOU ALL.

THE NIGHT FROM WHICH MY *SORROW* DATES WAS DEVOTED TO A MAGNIFICENT *MASQUERADE* GIVEN BY COUNT CARLSFELD FOR HIS ILLUSTRIOUS VISITOR, THE GRAND DUKE CHARLES.

"THE COUNT'S SCHLOSS LIES ABOUT SIX LEAGUES TO THE OTHER SIDE OF KARNSTEIN.

"MY CHILD HAD COME UNDER THE *ATTENTION* OF A CHARMING YOUNG LADY.

"THE YOUNG LADY, WHOM HER MOTHER CALLED BY THE ODD NAME MILLARCA, GOT INTO A *CONVERSATION* WITH MY WARD.

"THE DAM INTRODUCED HERSELF AS AN OLD *ACQUAINTANCE* OF MINE. SHE KNEW MY NAME, AND REFERRED TO MANY *SCENES* WHERE SHE HAD MET ME.

"HOWEVER, SHE STEADFASTLY *REFUSED* TO REVEAL HER IDENTITY TO ME.

"PRESENTLY WE WERE INTERRUPTED BY A GENTLEMAN WITH A MESSAGE.

OH, NO!

I SHALL RETURN AND INFORM MADAM LA COMTESSE WHEN HER CARRIAGE IS AT THE DOOR.

MOTHER..?

NOT NOW, CHILD.

IT WAS VERY UNLUCKY HIS SPEAKING TO ME JUST NOW AS HE DID.

THEN WE ARE TO LOSE MADAM LA COMTESSE ?

DO YOU KNOW ME NOW ?

I'M AFRAID NOT.

YOU SHALL. WE ARE OLDER AND BETTER FRIENDS THAN YOU PERHAPS SUSPECT.

THIS MOMENT A PIECE OF NEWS HAS REACHED ME LIKE A THUNDERBOLT. I MUST SET OUT NOW AND TRAVEL BY A DEVIOUS ROUTE, NEARLY A HUNDRED MILES.

I AM DETERRED BY THE COMPULSORY ***RESERVE*** I PRACTICE FROM MAKING A SINGULAR REQUEST OF YOU.

THE WOMAN ASKED IF I WOULD CONSENT TO TAKE ***CHARGE*** OF HER DAUGHTER DURING HER ABSENCE.

MILLARCA'S HORSE HAD SUPPOSEDLY FALLEN AT A ***HUNT*** SHE HAD RECENTLY RIDDEN OUT TO WITNESS.

HER LAST CHARGE WAS THAT NO ATTEMPT WAS TO BE MADE TO LEARN ABOUT HER. SHE PROMISED ***COUNT CARLSFELD*** KNEW HER REASONS.

SOON AFTER MY DEAR CHILD BEGAN TO LOSE HER LOOKS AND HEALTH. SHE WAS AT FIRST VISITED BY APPALLING DREAMS--

--THEN, SHE FANCIED, BY A SPECTER SOMETIMES RESEMBLING MILLARCA, SOMETIMES IN THE SHAPE OF A ***BEAST*** WALKING AROUND THE FOOT OF HER BED.

LASTLY CAME SENSATIONS. ONE LIKE THE FLOW OF AN ICY *STREAM* AGAINST HER BREAST, ANOTHER LIKE A PAIR OF LARGE *NEEDLES* PIERCING HER SKIN.

YOU KNOW ENOUGH OF WHAT FOLLOWS TO SUFFICE, EXCEPT MILLARCA *DISAPPEARED* IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MY WARD'S DEATH

THE CHURCH IS THIS WAY, GENERAL

THANK YOU, TOBIAS.

AND THIS WAS ONCE PART OF THE *PALATIAL RESIDENCE* OF THE KARNSTEINS!

IT WAS A BAD FAMILY, AND HERE IT'S BLOOD-STAINED ANNALS ARE WRITTEN.

CHOCK! CHOCK!

WHAT'S THAT?

SOUNDS LIKE AN AXE.

SAY, THERE! WOODMAN!

AYE, S.R?

I AM IN SEARCH OF THE GRAVE OF MILLARCA, COUNTESS OF KARNSTEIN.

HOLD ON!

WE HAVE A PORTRAIT, AT HOME, OF MIRCALLA; SHOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT?

TIME ENOUGH, DEAR FRIEND.

I BELIEVE THAT I HAVE SEEN THE *ORIGINAL*.

WHAT! WHY SHE HAS BEEN *DEAD* MORE THAN A CENTURY.

NOT SO DEAD AS *YOU* FANCY, I AM TOLD.

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T HELP YOU TRACK DOWN THAT GRAVE, SIR.

CAN ANYONE?

THERE IS AN OLD MAN, A RANGER OF THIS FOREST PRESENTLY SOJOURNING AT THE PRIEST'S, TWO MILES AWAY.

HE CAN POINT OUT EVERY *MONUMENT* OF THE OLD KARNSTEIN FAMILY.

HAVE YOU BEEN LONG EMPLOYED ABOUT THIS FOREST ?

MY FAMILY HAS FOR GENERATIONS.

HOW CAME THIS VILLAGE TO BE DESERTED ?

IT WAS TROUBLED BY *REVENANTS*, MADAM.

SEVERAL WERE TRACKED TO THEIR GRAVES, THERE DETECTED BY THE USUAL TESTS, AND *EXTINGUISHED* IN THE USUAL WAYS, BUT NOT UNTIL MANY OF THE VILLAGERS WERE KILLED.

"EVEN THEN THE VILLAGE WAS NOT RELIEVED. BUT A MORAVIAN NOBLEMAN, SKILLED IN SUCH AFFAIRS, HEARD HOW MATTERS WERE AND VISITED THE VILLAGE TO DELIVER IT FROM ITS TORMENTOR.

"THERE BEING A BRIGHT MOON THAT NIGHT, THE MORAVIAN ASCENDED THE TOWER OF THE CHAPEL HERE, FROM WHENCE HE COULD SEE THE CHURCHYARD BENEATH HIM.

"HE WATCHED UNTIL THE *VAMPIRE* CAME OUT OF HIS GRAVE, AND PLACE NEAR IT THE LINEN CLOTHES IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN FOLDED

"CARRYING THE LINEN BACK TO HIS PERCH, THE MORAVIAN *TAUNTED* THE VAMPIRE TO FOLLOW HIM.

"ACCEPTING HIS INVITATION, THE VAMPIRE BEGAN TO CLIMB THE STEEPLE...

". AND AS SOON AS HE HAD REACHED THE BATTLEMENTS, THE MORAVIAN, WITH A STROKE OF HIS SWORD--

"THE STRANGER CUT THE VAMPIRE'S *HEAD* OFF, AND NEXT DAY *DELIVERED* IT AND THE CORPSE TO THE VILLAGERS, WHO DULY IMPALED AND BURNED THEM.

THIS MORAVIAN NOBLEMAN HAD *AUTHORITY* TO REMOVE THE TOMB OF MiRCALLA, WHICH HE DID EFFECTUALLY.

CAN YOU POINT OUT WHERE IT STOOD ?

NO, SIR

NOT A LIVING SOUL COULD TELL YOU THAT NOW. BESIDES, THEY SAY HER BODY WAS *REMOVED*--

"--BUT NO ONE IS SURE OF THAT EITHER."

OH, PAPA! *LOOK!*

CARMILLA IS HERE!

DON'T TELL ME YOU WALKED ALL THIS WAY, CHILD ?

IT WAS QUITE PLEASANT ..

YOU!

GENERAL ! DON'T !

MURDERER ! MONSTER !

GAA-RRRGH!

GOOD GOD, GENERAL, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT ?

SHE... SHE CALLED HERSELF CARMILLA ?

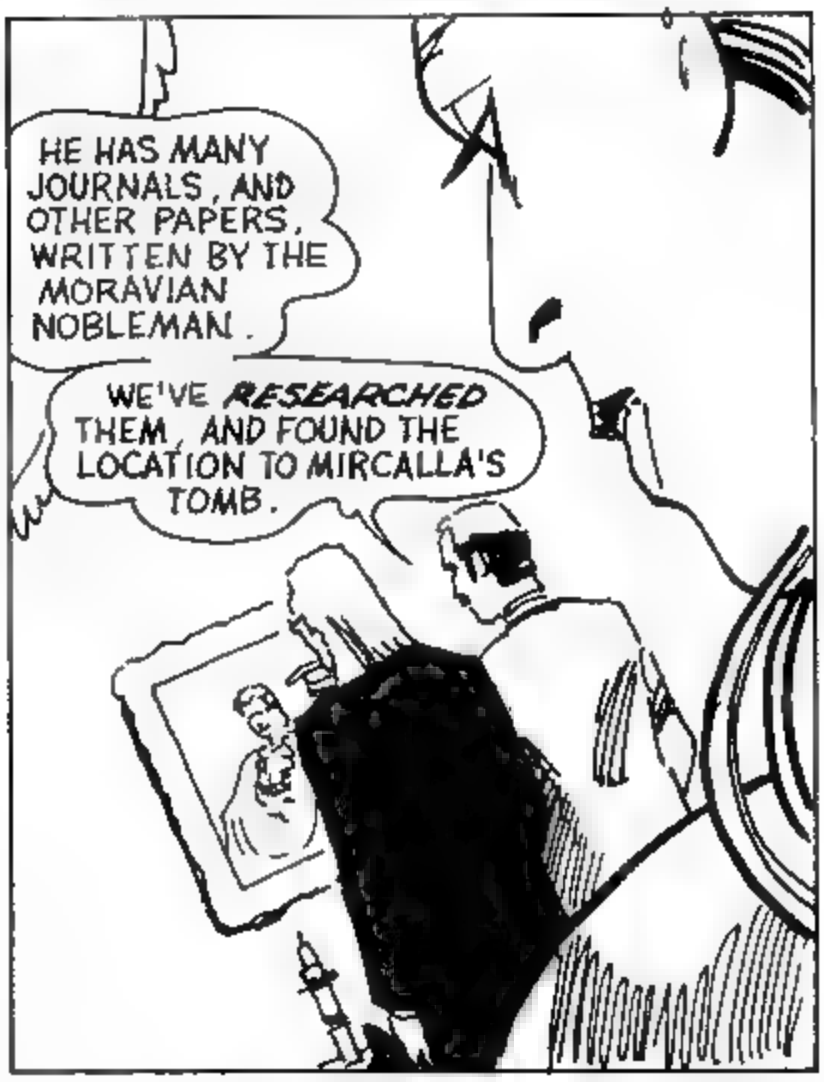
CARMILLA, YES

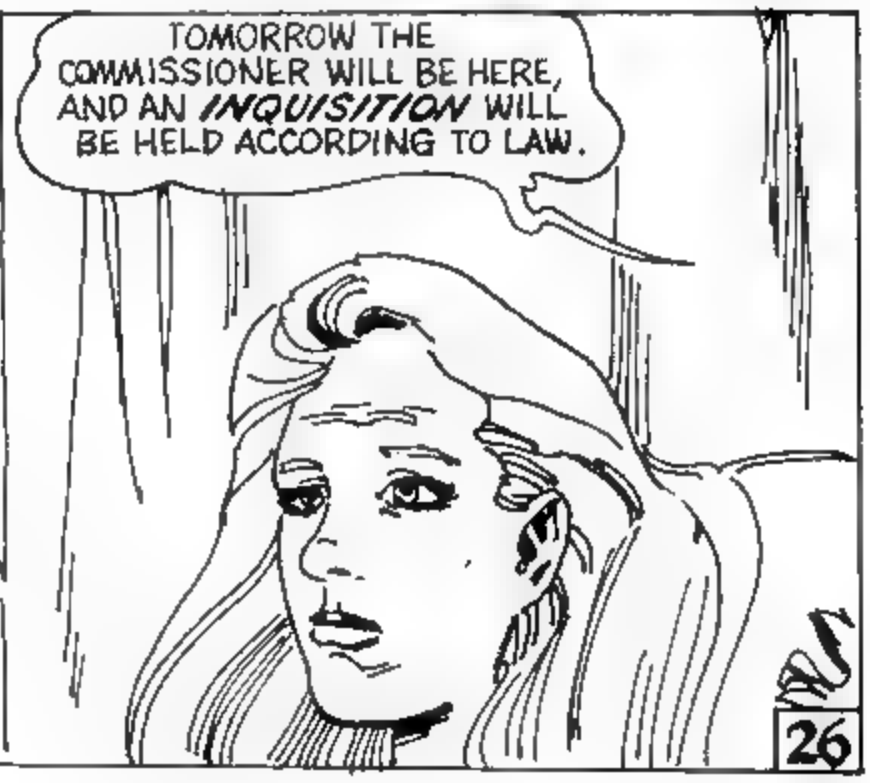
AYE, THAT IS MILLARCA ! THAT IS THE SAME PERSON WHO LONG AGO WAS CALLED MILLARCA, COUNTESS KARNSTEIN !

POOR CHILD, DRIVE TO THE CLERGY-MAN'S HOUSE. STAY THERE TILL WE COME.

MAY YOU NEVER BEHOLD CARMILLA MORE; YOU WILL NOT FIND HER HERE.

XII. INTERLUDE V: 'ORDEAL'


HE HAS MANY JOURNALS, AND OTHER PAPERS, WRITTEN BY THE MORAVIAN NOBLEMAN.
WE'VE *RESEARCHED* THEM, AND FOUND THE LOCATION TO MIRCALLA'S TOMB.



XIII. 'EXECUTION'

THUNK THUNK

'X' MARKS THE SPOT, GENTLEMEN. BREACH HERE.

BUT IT LOOKS LIKE PART OF THE WALL.

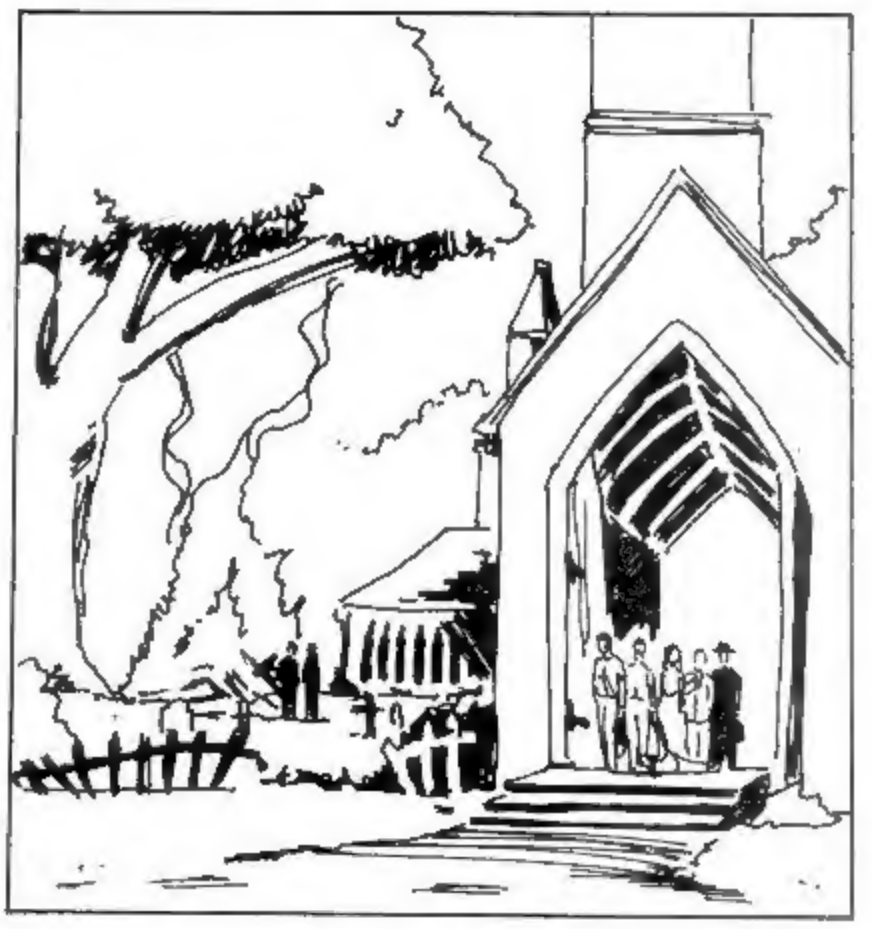
AN *EXCELLENT* DISGUISE, DON'T YOU THINK, COMMISSIONER?

"NO *CADAVEROUS* SMELL EXHALED FROM THE COFFIN. THE FEATURES, THOUGH A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE HER FUNERAL, WERE *TINTED* WITH THE WARMTH OF LIFE.

"IT WAS LONG BEFORE THE *TERROR* OF RECENT EVENTS SUBSIDED; AND TO THIS HOUR THE *IMAGE* OF CARMILLA RETURNS TO MEMORY WITH AMBIGUOUS ALTERATIONS--

"--SOMETIMES THE PLAYFUL, LANGUID GIRL--

"--SOMETIMES THE WRITHING FIEND I SAW IN THE RUINED CHURCH--



"--AND OFTEN FROM A REVERIE I HAVE STARTED, FANCYING I HEARD THE LIGHT STEP OF CARMILLA AT MY BEDROOM DOOR."

GOOD-BYE.

The End